



ANGLICAN DIOCESE  
OF CANBERRA &  
GOULBURN

**GUIDELINES FOR  
REPORTING CHILD  
ABUSE**

**Safe Ministry Helpline  
1800 070 511**

# GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

If you have a concern or receive a disclosure of child abuse you are required to report your concern. You are **not required** to establish or investigate if child abuse has occurred.

## Reasonable Grounds for Reporting

You have reasonable grounds to report abuse if:

- A child tells you they have been or are at risk of being abused
- Someone else tells you that they know of a child who has been or is at risk of being abused
- You have concerns that the child may have been or is at risk of being abused based their physical appearance or behaviour

## Who Reports child abuse

The Diocese requires that we all exercise our ethical responsibility to report our concerns or disclosures, regardless of our ministry position or legislation.

## How to report child abuse

**If you have a concern or receive a disclosure of child abuse ring the Safe Ministry Helpline on 1800 070 511**

You will be connected to a person (*either the Director of Safe Communities Unit or the Professional Standards Director*). They will assist you to make a decision about whether or not to report. They will assist you to make contact with the Child Protection Hotline (NSW) or Care & Protection Services (ACT).

They will also advise the Rector/Priest in Charge (if appropriate) and instigate support mechanisms for the parish as required.

## Allegations of child abuse against church workers

Where an allegation of child abuse is made against a church worker<sup>1</sup>, the Professional Standards Ordinance process may be activated. The Safe Communities Unit can provide further information on this process by contacting **1800 070 511**.

## Special cases for NSW Parishes

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<sup>1</sup>A church worker is a member of clergy or a lay person (*paid or volunteer*) appointed or elected to a position of responsibility in the Diocese.

### *Allegations of abuse against employees*

If your parish has a DoCS funded /licensed child-focused centre and an allegation is made against an employee (paid or volunteer), reports must be made to the Ombudsman using the Reportable Conduct legislation. Contact the Safe Ministry Helpline on **1800 070 511** for assistance.

### *School-based Ministry*

SRE teachers in NSW forming concerns or receiving a disclosure should inform the Principal unless the Principal is the alleged abuser and request from the Principal the reference number given by the statutory body as proof of the reporting. SRE teachers are also required to advise the Safe Ministry Helpline on **1800 070 511**.

## **Guidelines for responding to disclosures<sup>2</sup>**

Leaders in children's and youth ministry are in a unique position and their relationship with children cannot be underestimated. Their group may be providing a safe haven, and perhaps the only place where a child/young person feels comfortable and able to talk to adults. It is therefore possible that a child may approach you to talk about abuse.

If you find yourself in this situation, you can show your care and concern by:

- Listening carefully to what the young person is saying, but close down the conversation as soon as possible.
- Controlling expressions of panic or shock.
- Reassuring the child that disclosing was the right thing to do.
- Indicating what you will do, i.e. that you will contact the Safe Ministry Helpline for assistance.

Please do not:

- Express anger or disgust about the alleged abuser.
- Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone or stop the abuse happening.
- Seek further details beyond those that the child/young person freely wants to discuss.

## **Understanding your role:**

Your role is not to conduct an investigation.

Your role is to nurture and minister to the child/young person and not engage in discussions around the abuse or investigations.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Keeping Children & Young People Safe*, 2011, Office for Children, Youth & Family Support, Canberra.

Please do not share what they have said to you with anyone other than the person receiving the 1800 call. In this situation, confidentiality is very important.

Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter, as the adult may be abusing other children/young people. Also it may be that the child/young person will need guidance and help in overcoming the effects of the abuse.

## **Possible Trauma from Exposure to Disclosures of Abuse**

Each person has a unique response to receiving a disclosure of abuse. There may be some common reactions such as: shock, anger, sympathy for the victim and frustration.

However, there may also be more severe reactions which may in some cases have a more invasive impact on a person's ability to function effectively within their ministry and life in general. In these situations, it may be helpful for them to seek additional counselling support. The 1800 number may be accessed in this situation for assistance.

The 1800 number may also be accessed:

- If someone is a victim of abuse and would like support
- If someone is a family member of a victim of abuse and would like support

## **Our Commitment:**

Our Diocese is committed to **holistic Safe Ministries**. This means: we commit to our pastoral, insurance, legal and duty of care obligations; with its goal that all ministries are spiritually, emotionally and physically safe; based on the premise that Diocesan parishes and ministries should be abuse and harm free, person valuing and respectful spaces for ministry to God's glory.

Our Diocese does not tolerate abuse of any kind. We all have a responsibility to report our concerns and disclosures of abuse.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

### **SAFE MINISTRY UNIT**

Ph: 02 6245 7158

E: <mailto:safeministry@anglicands.org.au>

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